DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 277 086 EA 018 275

TITLE	Long-Term School Improvement Data-Based at Centennial High School. Profiles: Programs & Products. Goal Based Education Number 43.
INSTITUTION	Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, OR. Goal Based Education Program.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Nov 85
CONTRACT	400-83-0005
NOTE	8p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Collected Works - Serials (022)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Attendance; *Educational Improvement; Educational Planning; High Schools; Participative Decision Making; Pilot Projects
IDENTIFIERS	*Centennial School District OR

ABSTRACT

Centennial High School in Gresham, Oregon, was one of three pilot schools selected in 1983 to use a research-based school improvement process developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. In the process, the local school establishes a leadership team to manage school improvement, collects data on student performance, uses the data to determine a high priority improvement goal, selects and implements practices that research has shown can help to meet the goal, and monitors progress toward goal achievement. Following its establishment of a leadership team and its assessment of needs based on student performance data and teachers' perceptions of problem areas, Centennial established as its two major goals a 50 percent reduction in attendance problems and 10 percent increases in achievement test scores, enrollments in advanced classes, percentages of time on task, and success rates on tests and assignments. This report describes the specific steps taken at Centennial, the use of inservice training in the program, the extent of teacher participation, the school's success in reaching the stated goals, and the school's continuing efforts at improvement. (PGD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED277086

EA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Profiles programs & products

Long-Term School Improvement Data-Based at Centennial High School

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
300 S.W. Sixth Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97204

Goal Based Education
Number 43 November 1985

The work upon which this publication is based was performed pursuant to Contract 400-83-0005 of the National Institute of Education. It does not, however, necessarily reflect the views of that agency.

EA 018 275

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Profiles programs & products

Long-Term School Improvement Data-Based at Centennial High School

For the past three years, Centennial High School has focused on using student performance data as the basis for goal setting, planning and change through the establishment of a data-based approach to long-term school improvement. The school, located in a suburb of Portland, Oregon, serves 1,550 students in grades 9-12. There are few minority students at the school and 20 percent of students are involved in the free and reduced lunch program, a figure which has grown steadily over the past three years.

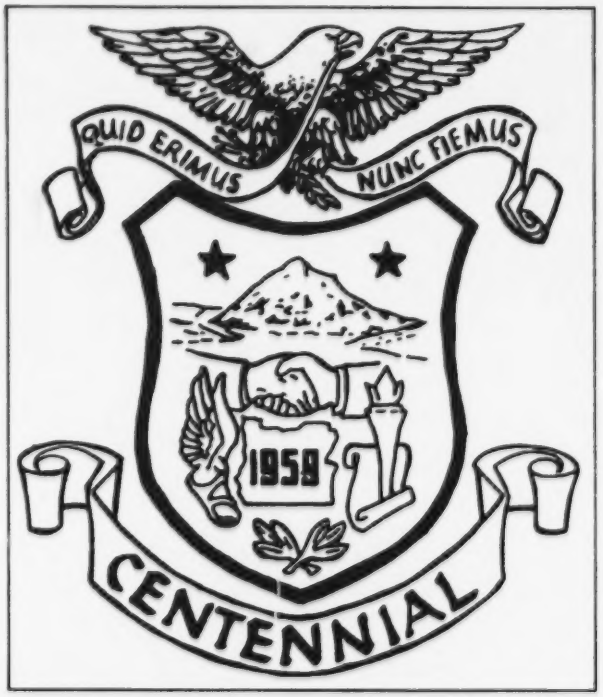
Now in the second cycle of a research-based school improvement approach, results of Centennial efforts have included:

- The establishment of coooperative decision making involving the full staff in school improvement goal setting, planning and implementation which has led to improved staff morale and increased participation and enthusiasm for schoolwide improvement
- Use of student performance data for establishing goals for improvement and as the barometer for measuring improvement successes
- The institution of a schoolwide attendance/tardy policy
- Improved student performance on nationally-normed standardized achievement tests
- Development of a schoolwide commitment to long-term improvement

Focusing the School

School administrators first began to explore long-term, data-based school improvement in 1983 when Centennial became one of three pilot schools selected to use a research-based school improvement process developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). In the process, the local school establishes a leadership team to manage school improvement, collects data on student performance, uses the data to determine a priority improvement goal, selects and implements practices supported by research that can contribute to meeting the goal, plans and puts into effect those practices and monitors progress toward goal achievement.

When approached by NWREL to pilot the process, the school, like many others, faced such problems



Data–based school improvement is focused on improving student performance at Centennial High School.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
300 S.W. Sixth Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97204

Goal Based Education
Number 43 November 1985

as reduced resources, increased pressures for excellence and low staff morale. A teachers' strike had been narrowly averted just before the school adopted the approach.

School administrators agreed to undertake the improvement process, and a nine-member leadership team was selected to be representative of all areas of the school. Included were two teachers from the required core curriculum areas, two teachers from elective curriculum areas, one counselor, one department head representing the already-existing decision making group of department heads in the school, a central office representative, the principal and an assistant principal. As the team learned and began to follow the improvement process, they passed on information and involved the full staff in decision making at key points.

The first major step was to collect student performance data and prepare a "profile" of the school. The profile included data on student social behavior, academic achievement and attitude is mostly derived from existing school records. To supplement the existing data, the team developed and circulated a staff needs assessment opinion survey asking teachers to rank in importance specified problem areas in the school. This information was then incorporated into the school profile. Each group of student performance data in the profile was presented in two forms: a data chart and a series of short narrative statements describing key findings in the data.

Appointed in April 1983, the team completed the profile by July then analyzed profile data to identify two major schoolwide improvement goals:

1. By June, 1985, Centennial High School will reduce students' absences and tardies by 50 percent.

2. By June 1985, Centennial High School student academic performance will improve by 10 percent, as measured by the California Achievement Test, percent enrolled in "advanced" courses, percent of time on task in the classroom and success rate on tests and assignments.

At the staff inservice session just before the beginning of school in September, the team distributed the profile and goals and discussed the thrust of the improvement effort with the faculty. The goals selected were a direct reflection of faculty-perceived needs identified through the needs assessment survey.

Working Toward the Goals

The team then began to involve the full faculty in work to meet the improvement goals. The first year's major effort focused on the institution of a schoolwide attendance and tardy policy, which had been identified as the highest priority problem in the needs assessment survey. The leadership team, after researching current Centennial practices and approaches used in other schools, developed an attendance/tardy policy which was completed by December, 1983. The policy, designed to clarify responsibilities of school, parents and students regarding student attendance, listed objectives; defined "excused absence," "unexcused absence" and "tardy" and consequences to students; and delineated attendance reporting procedures.

From January through May 1984, a group of 15 volunteer teachers, selected to assure representation of the 12 departmental areas of the school, piloted the policy and accompanying procedures. This group of volunteer teachers then met extensively with the leadership team during May to refine the policy and ready it for schoolwide adoption. The final policy and procedures were completed by June, with the understanding that all staff would begin implementation the following school year.

In August 1984, pre-school workshops for the full staff included explanation and guidelines for the new policy. As the school moved into the second school year of the long-term improvement project, all faculty were now involved in a focused schoolwide improvement effort.

Schoolwide Efforts

While working to create and implement the attendance/tardy policy during the 1983-84 school year, the leadership team was also moving to meet the academic performance goal and to establish staffwide commitment to and involvement in data-based school improvement. Team activities included:

- December 1983: An engagement rate study in classrooms throughout the school to collect further information for improvement planning. Twelve teachers' classrooms were randomly selected wherein Centennial staff and external consultants observed students to determine if they were involved in content-oriented activities while in class. Data from this study was then analyzed for student engagement rate and set aside for future comparisons.

- May 1984: A staff survey to discover the degree of implementation of research-identified effective schooling practices within the classroom. This survey served as a needs assessment to guide the team in planning faculty skill-building inservice sessions for the following year.

- May 1984: A staff survey on current approaches to student rewards and incentives, to generate ideas for new methods and begin to change the focus of the school toward positive reinforcement of students.

- May 1984: Circulation of results of staff surveys and identification of plans for staff inservice and schoolwide activities for the 1984-85 school year.

- July 1984: Collection of new student performance data and updating of the school profile for use in planning. The two improvement goals were reconfirmed and commitment to meet them renewed by June 1985.

- August 1984: The formalizaion of an organizational structure to facilitate two-way communication about school improvement issues with the entire faculty. Building on an existing concept of the Faculty Senate in the school, the team reorganized all teachers into small groups, randomly selected to avoid departmental groupings. One leadership team member joined each group to serve as liaison between the group and the team. Each group elected a Chair, Vice Chair and representative to the Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate then began to meet regularly to focus on day-to-day concerns of the staff while the leadership team continued to manage long-term improvements with increased feedback from the full staff.

From adoption of the process in April, 1983, through preparation for the 1984-85 school year, the leadership team worked steadily to document student and teacher needs in the school, to begin the establishment of a schoolwide approach to focused, data-based improvement and to involve the staff in improvement efforts.

Inservice Key

During the 1984-85 school year, the staff worked to put the new absence/tardiness policy into effect while the team began to concentrate on inservice programs to meet needs expressed by teachers in the May survey and on other activities to identify areas for improvement. A new district priority had been established to support the school improvement effort, and three teacher release time half-days were provided for school-generated inservice during the year. This district action provided the team an opportunity to select and present goal-related inservice sessions, among activities which included:

- Fall 1984: Institution of a schoolwide "Quest for the Best" program in which teachers nominate students for growth or improvement in attitude, behavior or academic achievement with quarterly luncheons held by the principal for selected students, their parent or guardian and the nominating teachers. This program continues to be a success in the school and has increased parent awareness and involvement in school programs.

- November 1984: The team organized a full-day all-staff workshop which included reports back on how the new attendance and tardy policy was being implemented and how reward and incentive systems might be applicable in classrooms to decrease attendance and tardiness problems. Workshop discussions also focused on reducing academic and non-academic pull-outs from regular classes to assure school time was used for teaching and learning.

- December 1984: A second engagement rate study was conducted by school staff and outside consultants and results were normed for comparison to the study completed in December 1983.

- February 1985: A special one-day project was conducted to increase teacher awareness of the students' experience of Centennial High. For one day, selected volunteer teachers shadowed individual students through their schedule of classes, observing student reactions and interactions and the way students felt about their time in the school. The 12 participating teachers prepared a report

to the leadership team with recommendations for changes in the school operation to improve the students' experiences. Recommendations included a change in lunch room organization; that students be encouraged to take at least one non-academic, non-lecture course daily; the investigation of modularized classes to break up the rigidity of the school's six-period schedule; the exploration of adding a 15-minute break during the school day for all students and staff; the urging of teachers to break up each class period into segments to vary the lecture-only format; and expanding the program to have administrators teach for one day so they could better understand the daily experience of teachers at the school. Participants also made recommendations about changes to this "A Day in the Life of a Student" program to improve observation value of the day.

- February 1985: A full-day staff inservice session was organized by the leadership team to include reports and discussion among faculty groups about the "Day in the Life" program, report on the engagement rate study and a mini-workshop on classroom management and the use of self-evaluative engagement rate data collection to help teachers improve use of classroom time.
- April 1985: A half-day staff inservice "Test-Wiseness" workshop for the full staff to increase awareness of the values of testing and ways to prepare students for tests. Based on their workshop experience, the team and staff developed and implemented incentive programs to increase attendance on the scheduled achievement testing day in the spring. Students in classes where fewer than six percent missed the testing day would receive a free ice cream treat; teachers with 100 percent class attendance would be treated to a free lunch at a local restaurant by the principal. Teachers in all testing classrooms also worked with students to encourage them to take the test and to help them understand how the May testing program works. Although some staff felt the incentives might not be effective, by the last day of school faculty members had passed out more than 750 ice cream bars to students--and the principal's lunch included 45 of the 80 teachers in the school.

At the end of the 1984-85 school year, the leadership team again collected student performance data to update the profile data base. During this process, they carefully examined the data to see whether or not the many-faceted improvement effort had affected student performance in the two goal areas.

Meeting the Goals

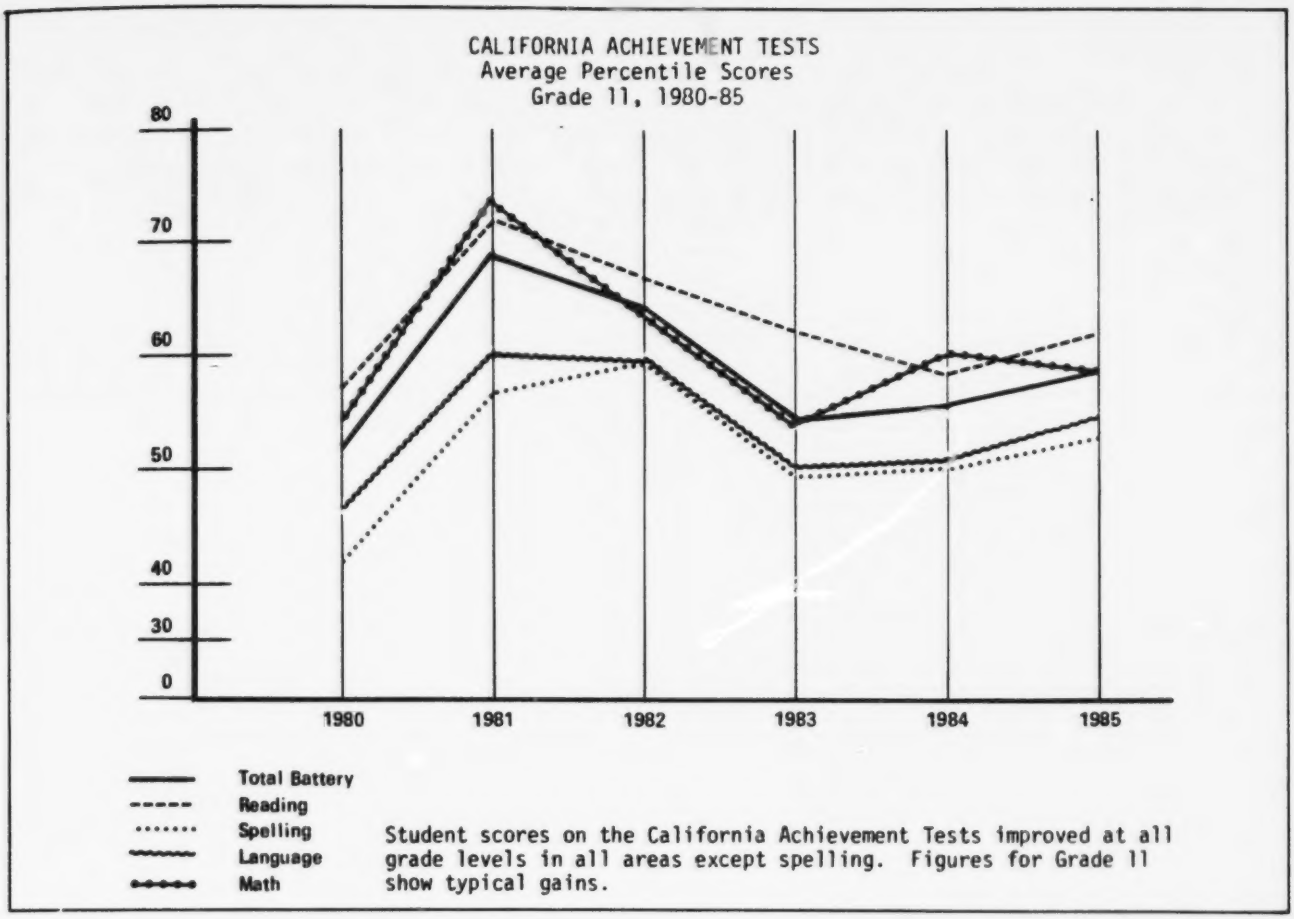
The CAT scores, in fact, showed the desired improvements. In identifying how to measure the 10 percent increase stated in the formal goal, the team examined the scores in five ways. Overall, scores increased 10 percent in each grade level; 10 percent more of student individual scores increased than had increased in previous years; there was a 10 percent increase across the school over the national mean; 10 percent of students moved from the bottom quartile (0-25) to the second quartile (25-50); and 10 percent moved from the second quartile (25-50) to the third quartile (50-75). Most dramatic result of the focus on test scores, in part, was that for the first time in the school's history, every senior taking the test improved in individual composite scores over the junior-year results on the same test.

The results of the two engagement rate studies, part of the academic achievement goal, indicated an increase in overall engagement rate across the school from 68 percent in 1983-84 to 77 percent in 1984-85. There was success in the attendance/tardiness goal area as well. Due to an increase in excused absences, the overall attendance rate remained the same from 1982-83 to 1984-85. An important drop occurred, however, in the number of unexcused absences--including skipping--in the school. In 1982-83, overall unexcused absences for the year averaged 5.6 percent. In 1984-85, that figure dropped to 3.2 percent, and among seniors only from 7 percent to 4 percent.

Continuing Efforts

Centennial High has continued work to find new ways to improve student performance in the school. In July of this year, the leadership team examined the updated profile information, including new data from a repeated teacher needs survey, and established three new improvement goals for the 1985-86 school year, one long-term goal each in student achievement, attitude and behavior and each including specific short-term objectives for the year:

1. Achievement goal: To improve or maintain scores in all areas on the California



According to longitudinal data compiled for the Centennial High School profile, student CAT scores (main battery composites) are climbing in all areas except math.

Achievement Test. Objectives: (1) Scores below the 60th percentile for each grade level in all areas will show improvement, with special emphasis on spelling scores. (2) Scores currently above the 60th percentile for each grade level in all areas will be maintained.

2. Attitude goal: To improve social responsibility by reducing inappropriate behavior among students. Objectives: (1) Develop a profile of current student attitude and behavior. (2) Establish a new code of conduct designed by a committee of staff, students and parents. (3) Implement a new student code in 1986-87.

3. Behavior goal: To decrease student absences. Objectives: (1) Continue enforcement on the schoolwide attendance policy. (2) Establish a study committee to identify a profile of chronic absentees (committee might include feeder-school teacher). (3) The Study Committee will propose ways to "target solutions to the chronic absentee." Performance criteria: Under the attendance policy instituted in 1985, the student absentee rate will be decreased from 10.2 percent to 8 percent (average daily absences).

The team is leading further efforts to meet these goals. Plans are being completed for a schoolwide emphasis on spelling in all courses which may serve as the first steps toward the alignment of instructional goals, instruction and assessment across the curriculum. One committee is working to develop the student code of conduct; others are working to complete second-level profiles of student attitude/behavior and of the chronic absentee.

Interest and support are widespread now in the school, and school improvement--continual efforts

to improve student performance--is now an integral part of the way the school "does business." District funds continue to support school-organized inservice sessions, the leadership team has become the accepted managing body for school improvement, and many faculty members are involved in committee work focused on the improvement goals. Rather than attempting to set and meet numerous goals each year, the whole staff now focuses on one or two annual improvement goals. Inservice programs each year are developed to increase staff skills in improvement goal areas.

The Faculty Senate has become a key link in school communications, and a formal system of annual selection of new groups of teachers who, in turn, elect Faculty Senate representatives, is firmly in place. A specific rotation of leadership team membership has been adopted, with continuation of the representative positions and annual, orderly change of membership.

As new data on student performance are collected and analyzed, staff have increasingly become aware that improvements are indeed taking place: this has resulted in increased teacher involvement, more positive staff attitude that their efforts are not being wasted and a generalized acceptance that the entire staff work together to improve the school.

Profile data collected each year is the main indicator schoolwide of successful improvement work. With progress toward goals thus documented annually, new interest is generated to renew improvement efforts. Administrators speculate that, as the more obvious goals such as attendance and behavior are met, more indepth academic goals will probably emerge, such as the new goal to improve spelling performance.

Collaborative decision making is now an integral part of school operation, as Faculty Senate and leadership team rely heavily on staff feedback in planning and goal setting. Strategies adopted are much more acceptable to the the staff because of their involvement in designing them. The emphasis on improvement as a long-term process that requires wide involvement and thoughtful management is integral to the operation of Centennial High School.

Established over the past three years, the process for improvement has changed schoolwide expectations and created a focus for all staff to work together for the benefit of the students. One indication of the acceptance of the new focus on improvement is that school administrators believe changes in staffing will not sidetrack the school from getting better: new administrators and teachers will join a school focused and intent on improving student performance.

For further information contact:

Richard H. Miller, Asst. Principal
Centennial High School
3505 S.E. 182nd Avenue
Gresham, OR 97030
(503) 661-7612

Ken Servas, Asst. Supt.
Centennial School District
18135 S.E. Brooklyn Street
Portland, OR 97236
(503) 760-7990